

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

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TAGS: UNCTAD, EWWT

SUBJECT: RE-EVALUATION OF USG PARTICIPATION IN THE FIFTH
UNCTAD INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY GROUP (IPG) ON
INTERNATIONAL MULTIMODAL TRANSPORT

REF: STATE 24300

1. INFORMATION REFTEL DISCUSSED WITH K. J. BURBRIDGE,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL TRANSPORT POLICY, AND
PETER CLARK OF INTERNATIONAL MULTIMODAL AND FACILITATION
BRANCH OF CANADIAN TRANSPORT COMMISSION. BURBRIDGE HAS
LED CANADIAN DELEGATION AT PREVIOUS IPG MEETINGS.

2. BURBRIDGE SAID CANADA (AND AUSTRALIA) ARE PARTICULARLY
KEEN TO PROCEED WITH IPG MEETINGS. FACT THAT CONCEALED
DAMAGE WOULD BE COVERED BY MT CONVENTION IS ALONE GOOD
ENOUGH REASON IN CANADIAN VIEW TO CONTINUE TO TRY TO
OBTAIN AGREEMENT. CANADA FULLY SUPPORTS U.S. VIEW THAT MT
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MUST BE PRIVATE LAW CONVENTION; CANADA COULD NOT ACCEPT
A PUBLIC LAW AGREEMENT.

3. BURBRIDGE IS CLEARLY CONCERNED THAT U.S. IS SERIOUSLY
CONSIDERING WITHDRAWING FROM IPG. HE SAID MT CONVENTION
WITHOUT U.S. AS PARTICIPANT WOULD HAVE LITTLE VALUE. IN
HIS VIEW IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO PULL OUT OF IPG AT THIS

STAGE. HE BELIEVES LEARNING PROCESS FOR DEVELOPING COUNTRIES BEGUN WITH 1973 IPG MEETING AND CONTINUED THROUGH 1977 SESSION IS JUST BEGINNING TO BEAR FRUIT, PROMISING GREATER LIKELIHOOD OF PRODUCTIVE SESSION IN SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER THIS YEAR.

4. IN VIEW OF CANADIAN INTEREST IN CONCLUDING MT CONVENTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE AND TO ENSURE THAT TIME AND WORK ALREADY INVESTED IN FIRST FOUR SESSIONS OF IPG MEETINGS ARE NOT WASTED, BURBRIDGE BELIEVES U.S., AS CANADA INTENDS, SHOULD CONTINUE PARTICIPATION IN IPG THROUGH SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER SESSION. IF CANADIAN HOPES FOR SIGNIFICANT MOVEMENT AT THAT SESSION, CLEARLY LEADING TO AGREEMENT ON MT CONVENTION AT A SIXTH AND FINAL SESSION IN 1979, ARE NOT REALIZED, CANADA TOO WOULD FAVOR WITHDRAWING FROM IPG THEN.

5. BURBRIDGE NOTED GROUP B COUNTRIES WILL MEET IN JUNE (PARA 5 REFTEL) TO DISCUSS IPG. HE SAID IN HIS VIEW MAJOR PROBLEM AT NEXT IPG WILL BE DIFFERENCES OF VIEW WITHIN GROUP B. THE SCANDINAVIANS, U.S., CANADA AND AUSTRALIA ON ONE SIDE, THE BRITISH AND FRENCH ON THE OTHER WITH REMAINING GROUP B STATES IN THE MIDDLE. FOR THIS REASON AND BECAUSE IT IS RECOGNIZED THAT ANY MT CONVENTION TO BE MEANINGFUL MUST INCLUDE THE U.S. AND CANADA, HE PROPOSED CANADIAN EXPERTS SHOULD VISIT WASHINGTON TO MEET WITH U.S. COUNTERPARTS TO FORM SOLID JOINT POSITION TO PUT BEFORE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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GROUP B IN JUNE. HE SUGGESTED THAT SUCH A MEETING WOULD BE MOST USEFUL ABOUT MID-APRIL. THAT TIMING WOULD ALLOW FOR A PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF THE OUTCOME OF THE HAGUE CONVENTION MEETING SCHEDULED MARCH 8-28 AT HAMBURG SINCE WHATEVER IS AGREED AT HAMBURG WILL HAVE A BEARING ON THE MT CONVENTION.

6. COMMENT: THE CANADIANS CLEARLY WOULD LIKE TO SEE U.S. CONTINUE IN THE IPG AT LEAST THROUGH THE SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER SESSION. THEY PLAN TO DO THAT THEMSELVES AND SEEM TO HAVE SOME OPTIMISM THAT PROGRESS CAN BE MADE.

7. ACTION: DEPARTMENT COMMENT ON U.S./CANADIAN MEETING PROPOSED BY BURBRIDGE FOR MID-APRIL IS REQUESTED. IN THAT REGARD, BURBRIDGE SAID HE HOPED THAT IF THE U.S. AGREED TO MEET IN APRIL, THE MEETING COULD BE CONFINED TO GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES ONLY. ENDERS

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